DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 220 029 HE 015 388

AUTHOR Takeuchi, Stuart M.
TITLE Planning Support from the Top: An Application of "Miles' Law" (Where You Stand Depends on Where You Sit). AIR Forum 1982 Paper.
PUB DATE May 82
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research (22nd, Denver, CO, May 16-19, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Policy; *Administrator Attitudes; Administrator Role; Change Strategies; College Administration; *College Planning; *Decision Making; Higher Education; *Institutional Research; *Interprofessional Relationship; Policy Formation; *Researchers; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *AIR Forum; Strategic Planning

ABSTRACT

Differences in perspectives concerning planning between administrators and planning staff were investigated at a midwestern university through interviews, and the results were used to identify ways to reduce these differences. In addition, the literature concerning planning in higher education was reviewed to identify institutional and planning process characteristics needed for optional results. The role of the chief executive officer in the planning process is addressed, and it is suggested that the planning process should be: strategic, linked to the resource allocation, integrated with the institution's regular operations, comprehensive, contain a policy analysis component, and implemented according to a plan and assessed. Interviews at the university were conducted with senior administrators, faculty, and planners or institutional researchers. Although there was consensus regarding preferred institutional characteristics and the characteristics of the planning process, there was considerable difference of opinion concerning the existence of top administrative support between senior administrators and senior planning staff. Senior administrators reported a great deal of support for planning, while the senior planning staff felt that the senior administrators were not committed to planning. Faculty respondents were mostly concerned with the opportunity for significant input at the appropriate time, as compared to the decisions themselves. It is recommended that planners should: take the initiative to understand the decision-maker's environment and style; help the decision-maker assess the implications and consequences associated with alternative decision scenarios; try to persuade the decision-maker to utilize data provided by the planner; and tolerate a planning decision-making process that is not fully rational. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED220029

18C(1)

44

PLANNING SUPPORT FROM THE TOP: AN APPLICATION OF "MILES' LAW" (WHERE YOU STAND DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU SIT)

Stuart M. Takeuchi
Assistant Vice Chancellor
for Academic Services
Campus Box 132
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado 80309
(303) 492-5323

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Association for
~~Institutional Research~~
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

HE 015 384

THE ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

This paper was presented at the Twenty-Second Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Denver Hilton Hotel in Denver, Colorado, May 16-19, 1982. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum papers.

D. R. Coleman, Chairman
Forum Publication
Advisory Committee

ABSTRACT

The perspective on and participation in planning by institutional officials will vary according to the expectations and demands placed on those officials by the position they hold. For example, it should not be expected that an institutional president and a planning officer will have the same views on planning since each official's position has different requirements. This paper identifies some of the demands placed on the chief executive officer and compares them to the expectations of the planning officer. It also identifies some ways to bridge the gap between the differing perspectives.

Introduction and Perspective

If the perspectives or views concerning the planning process held by the most senior participants in an institutional planning system differ greatly, the entire process and outcomes of a planning system can be affected because those perspectives will determine an individual's interest in and interpretation of planning as an institutional activity. A review of the literature of planning in higher education was conducted to identify characteristics an institution should have prior to starting a planning process as well as the characteristics the planning process should have that seem to optimize the results of planning. Based on these characteristics, information was collected about the planning system for a mid-western university to identify what, if any, differences in perspectives existed.

Differences were found between the senior officers and the senior planning staff. Reducing the extent of the differences, especially by the planners, can make executive decisions more closely related to what planners would like to see: data-based, logical-rational, and consistent with an institution-known plan.

Purpose

This paper will 1) describe the characteristics that formed the basis for collecting information about the planning system and the the differences in perspectives that appeared, 2) analyze why the differences exist, and 3) identify concepts for planners to help reduce the differences in order to provide the opportunity for greater congruence of perspectives about planning.

For the purposes of this paper, "planners" and "institutional researchers" and "planning" and "institutional research" will be used interchangeably. "Planning system" is used here in reference to planning for academic programs.

Literature Review

Miles (1978) offers a concept that can help explain how differing perspectives by institutional participants in planning systems should not be surprising but in fact should be expected: "Where you stand depends on where you sit." Miles suggests that one's organizational perspectives about an issue (such as planning) will be determined by the roles and responsibilities of one's current position in an organization.

In order to ascertain specific ways in which perspectives might differ about planning systems, two sets of concepts were found in the literature: 1) preferred institutional characteristics prior to planning, and 2) characteristics of the planning process.

Mims (1979) suggests that before an institution undertakes the design and implementation of a planning system, there are conditions that should exist:

1. some agreement that problems do exist and some agreement on the nature and extent of problems faced by the institution
2. a widely felt need to "do something"
3. top administrative support and involvement
4. the opportunity to plan
5. the capacity to plan, including resources and expertise
6. some stability in institutional leadership
7. the absence of immediate crisis
8. trust within the institution.

She further suggests that if most of these conditions do not exist, an institution should not embark on the planning effort.

Top administration (item 3, above), especially the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), play a particularly essential role in the planning process and not only because the CEO is responsible for the process' outcomes. The CEO's commitment and involvement is essential to:

1. provide the climate for planning and change so that the institutional community feels that planning is needed, that planning works, and that the institution will have some valuable direction as a result of the planning effort (Parekh, 1977)

2. serve as the architect of strategy in leading the institution and representing all institutional interests (Cope, 1978)

3. provide the understanding of the "existing natural ecosystems" of the institution within which planning will go on (Shuck, 1977)

4. sustain what Parekh (1977) refers to as a "gestalt of institutional change"; the CEO is the single institutional officer who is required to maintain an institution-wide perspective

5. prevent planning from "falling into absolutist traps." Shuck (1977) suggests that some staff planners may be unwilling to admit that a history of success can produce the conditions of disaster and that success in current terms should not be, by itself, sufficient justification for decisions about the future

6 "marketing" the planning process, perhaps with a simple metaphor to propel the idea (Cope, 1978) such as "Excellence in the 80's."

As an institution meets Mim's pre-planning conditions, the involvement and the thinking of the CEO leads naturally to the first characteristic among many that is suggested in regards to how the planning process should be implemented:

1. The planning process should be strategic in nature, i.e., as Cope (1978) suggests, strategic planning is concerned with the long-term development of the institution, its essential character, its personality, and its essence. This broad view is basic to the determination of long-range goals, adopting courses of action, and the allocation of resources necessary to reach goals. Strategic planning, with its long-term and broad-view, attracts commitment from the institutional community, is the conceptual defense against projects that may capture momentary enthusiasm, and provides for continuity of thought about the nature of the institution.

2. The planning process should be linked to the resource allocation process (Micek, 1980; Kieft, 1978; Braun, 1979; Shirley and Volkwein, 1978). This linkage or integration of planning to resource allocation lends a seriousness of purpose to planning that is important for the amount of institutional effort required to conduct a good planning process. Without the linkage, the planning activity can be viewed as a bothersome and meaningless exercise in data collection and "Master Plan" production while the institution's pragmatists will concentrate on those other activities needed to obtain resources and retain influence.

A suggested method of providing the linkage between planning and resource allocation is "Program Review," or the process by which institutional programs are evaluated in the context of institutional role and mission leading to resource allocation recommendations.

3. Planning should be integrated with the regular operations of the institution (Miyataki, n.d.; Parekh, 1977). Clearly, if planning is perceived as an activity peripheral to more "meaningful" activities, planning will not be credible. This kind of integration generally requires the development of a planning process that recognizes the

institution's governance structure and processes.

4. Planning should be comprehensive, i.e., include the whole institution (Kieft, et al., 1978; Kieft, 1978). Indeed, Parekh (1977) suggests that a planning program will succeed only if the planning process has the same meaning and validity for the English Department as it has for the Admissions Office.

5. A planning system should have a policy analysis component (Balderston, 1974). As specific plans are developed and especially when plans are changed, it is essential for the impact of the plans or changes on the overall plan and strategic concepts to be assessed.

6. A planning system should have a plan (Cooke, 1979) and should be assessed (Kieft, et al., 1978). A planning system that is not managed according to institutional or CEO objectives may be able to complete the steps of a planning process without accomplishing any good planning for the institution's future. Kieft et al. (1978) suggests that planning must be assessed to determine the extent to which planning is helping the institution achieve its goals, though Mims (1979) suggests that in assessing planning, it should be remembered that dramatic institutional changes attributable to planning have rarely happened.

7. A planning system should not focus on the production of a paper plan. Dressel, Johnson, and Marcus (1971) offer that the internalization of the process that produces the plan is far more important to the health of the institution than the plan itself.

8. A planning system should not be viewed as completely rational. As Enarson (1975) suggests, planning is "inseparable from management and both involve those elements we associate with art--intuition, creativity, discernment, command of the work tools and materials, and an appreciation

of the interaction of form and function," and that planning is not a "Cook's tour" with a precise schedule on a well-defined route.

Methodology/Approach

The information concerning perspectives was collected through hour-long interviews with the institution's most senior administrative, faculty, and staff participants in the institution's planning process. The author had been employed at the institution since 1973, had been an active participant in the planning system from 1977 to 1981, and personally was acquainted with all the interviewees and their backgrounds. The interviews were designed to elicit as much of the differences of perspectives on the "preferred institutional characteristics" and the "characteristics of the planning process" as possible, and utilized five basic questions, supplemented with clarifying questions as needed:

1. What is planning?
2. What is your understanding of the current planning process, including who the principal "actors" are and what their responsibilities are for planning?
3. What are some of the best features of the current planning process?
4. What are some of the weaknesses of the current planning process?
5. What changes would you make or suggest?

Results

A summary of the general interview results is that there was considerable consensus and similarity of perspectives concerning the "preferred institutional characteristics" and the "characteristics of the planning process." However, there was a considerable difference of opinion concerning the existence of "top administrative support" (Mims' third

pre-condition; Mims, 1979) between senior administrators and senior planning staff. The senior administrators reported a great deal of support for planning as a valuable management tool while the senior planning staff felt that the institution's senior administrators were "not committed to planning." Other ways that the differing perspectives on this issue emerged included:

1. The administrators' emphasis on planning as one tool among many by which the management of the institution is enhanced, as compared to the staff's general view that planning should be the principal manner by which the institution's future is described and implemented.

2. The administrator's view that a major strength of the planning system was the flexibility provided for decision-making, while staff felt that excessive flexibility was its greatest weakness.

3. The administrator's view that planning provided helpful decision-influencing information on occasion, while staff concluded that the system produced massive amounts of important information was rarely, if ever, used.

Faculty's responses were difficult to assess in the context of the above findings. Perhaps the most significant sentiment was that the faculty was mostly concerned with the opportunity for significant input, at the appropriate time, as compared to the decisions themselves. It was not determined whether or not this statement was representative of the faculty as a whole.

Discussion

It will be assumed that the above-described difference of opinion is significant for planners since it can help explain some of the frustrations

(observed by the author) encountered by planners in seeing their work as planners lead to visible results for the institution.

Analysis of the differences in perspective concerning planning between administrators and planning staff can be generalized as differences in the perceived need for flexibility versus prescription in planning systems, as determined by one's role in the institution (see Figure 1).

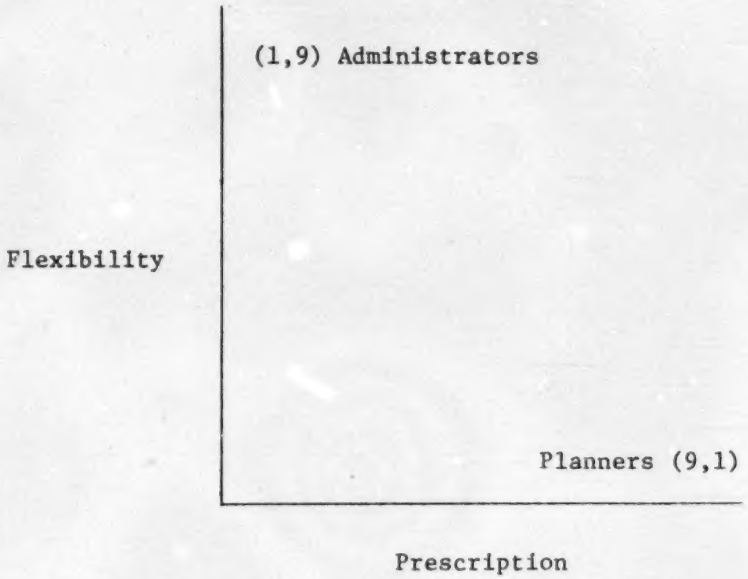

Figure 1: Perceived Needs for Flexibility Versus Prescription in Planning Systems

Senior administrators, especially the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), will generally place themselves at position (1,9) on Figure 1 because that position affords them the greatest flexibility, over time, in accomplishing their objectives for a planning system, which will be directly related to their senior management responsibilities for the entire institution. The CEO must, according to Balderston (1974), work with five areas of interaction:

1. the governing board
2. a configuration of external constituencies
3. the academic organization of the institution
4. the administrative hierarchy and its many units of operation
5. the faculty, staff, and multipartite organizations, committees, and floating constituencies (the latter referring to issue-based, temporary coalitions).

Given these interactions, the CEO must have a great deal of flexibility in responding to the expectations of the position. As Balderston (1974) reminds us, ". . . the person of the president is supposed to convey symbolic qualities to numerous distinct and often conflicting constituencies." Thus, the conflicts of these symbolic requirements can impose risks on the CEO as significant as those resulting from substantive decisions that go awry (Balderston, 1974). It should therefore not be surprising that some CEO's will not often commit themselves to a significant course of action until the implications of such an action can be predicted with a reasonable amount of accuracy. Decision-making by CEO's may be less of a question of what to decide but rather how and when to implement the decision and with what implications for the institution or the CEO, or both.

For example, the decision to eliminate a historically popular but now obsolete academic program may be a clear-cut one, but other academic developments such as collective bargaining may delay implementation of the program elimination for several years. On the other hand, external economic pressures may require budget reductions that could provide an earlier opportunity for the program's elimination. The CEO will attempt to retain sufficient flexibility to be able to determine the proper

timing for implementing decisions, in the context of the constellation of other factors requiring consideration, as well as the flexibility to change his/her mind.

Planners, or institutional researchers, will generally place themselves at position (9,1) on Figure 1 because that position indicates the need for a high degree of prescriptiveness in the planning system. That prescriptiveness means that the CEO will utilize data and information produced by the planning system to make decisions that will begin to fix some of the multitude of variables comprising the institutional decision-making and planning environment. This tendency is consistent with Tetlow's (1979) contention that "(t)he crux of institutional research activity is in providing decision-influencing information to those who govern and manage higher educational institutions." Thus, planners will seek prescriptiveness emerging from a planning system because it will indicate that the planning system is producing visible evidence that "planning" is actually going on and that institutional research is, in fact, being used. The extent to which decisions are made by CEOs with little apparent relation to information produced by the planning system or by institutional researchers is a measure of the flexibility sought by CEOs more than it is a "failure" of planning.

Conclusion

The gap between the preferred positions of the CEO and the planner as shown in Figure 1 can be reduced, but with great care concerning the direction of the movements chosen by the parties involved.

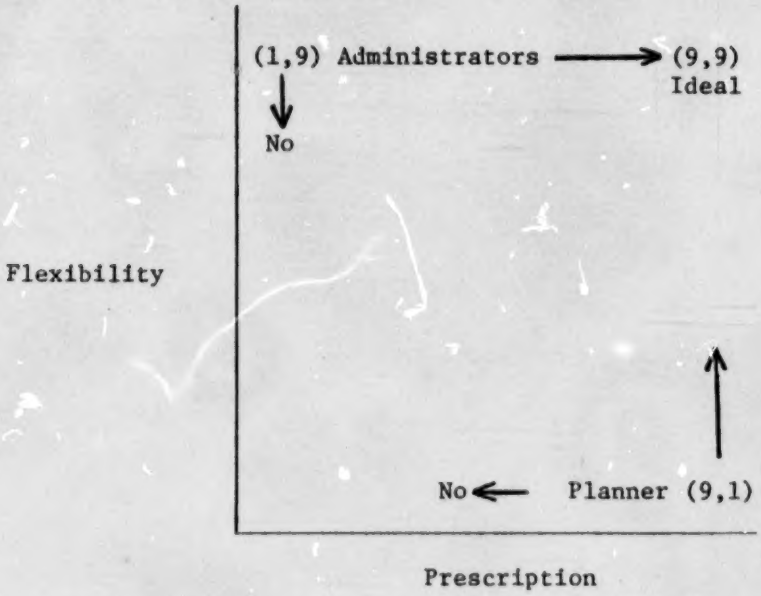

Figure 2: Reducing the Difference in Perceived Needs for Flexibility Versus Prescription

Figure 2 shows only two viable options available for reducing the gap. Position (9,9) represents the ideal balance in a planning system: sufficient flexibility to satisfy the CEO's needs based on his/her roles and responsibilities but enough prescription to provide for "good," visible decision-making to emerge (and also satisfying the planner's needs).

The extent to which the ideal is approached will be dependent on the magnitude of the CEO's movement from the (1,9) position toward the (9,9) position--toward more prescription--and similarly, the planner's movement from the (9,1) position toward the (9,9) position--toward more flexibility. Both of these movements will be dependent on the planner's ability to first of all understand the CEO's roles and responsibilities, and therefore, the CEO's perspective on planning systems generally. Then,

the planner must be able to work with the CEO to determine his/her relative feelings about flexibility and prescription in decision-making and the specific ways in which the planner can assist the CEO in accurately defining the nature of institutional problems encountered and projecting the outcomes of decisions made. Clearly, the personal relationship between the CEO and the planner is critical to accomplishing what Wilensky (in Tetlow, 1979) refers to as the planner's "organizational intelligence function." But equally important is the CEO's decision-making style and willingness to assume more prescription, as well as the planner's willingness to "tolerate" more flexiblity in the planning system and thus move toward more flexibility.

An implication here is that if the planner is unwilling or unable to create movement by the CEO toward more flexibility, the planner can still move toward more flexibility as a means of reducing some of the difference in perspective. This latter movement, by itself, is certainly not an optimal reduction of the difference, but is a clear move away from the original positions.

Figure 2 also shows that CEO's will not move toward <u>less</u> flexibility nor will planners move toward <u>less</u> prescription. CEO's will not give up flexibility because it represents one of the primary means of responding to their difficult decision-making environment. The distinction between less flexibility and more prescription is important here: the former would imply that the planning system would require the CEO to make certain decisions based on rational data while the latter implies that the CEO's decision-making style and criteria are accounted for by the planner in presenting data.

Planners will not (or should not) give up prescription because it represents the credibility of the profession: to collect, analyze, and report basic institutional data--Wilensky's (in Tetlow, 1979) "facts and figures" specialists. If that role is compromised, represented by a movement toward less prescription, the planner's contribution to the institution's future will be significantly lessened, since a lack of credible data will undermine any attempts at rational decision-influencing. This is distinguished from movement toward more flexibility by the planners which implies a greater appreciation for the CEO's role, responsibilities, and perspectives and the planner's reduced expectations for decisions based solely on the "conclusive" data produced by the planning system.

In summary, the planner who seeks a decision-influencing role for himself/herself or the planning function can work to reduce the distance between differences in perspectives in the following ways:

1. The planner must take the initiative and work to understand the decision-maker's environment and style, especially concerning the use of informational, rational bases for decisions.

2. The planner must begin to help the decision-maker assess the implications, the consequences, and the probabilities associated with alternative decision scenarios on issues of significance.

3. Given the above, the planner must try to persuade the decision-maker to utilize data provided by the planner that will help the decision-maker to act, according to the decision-maker's criteria.

4. The planner, in the process of implementing items 1-3 above, will himself/herself move to reduce the gap by understanding and "tolerating" a less-than-fully rational planning decision making process.

5. Should the necessary personal relationship between the decision-maker and the planner not emerge, or if the decision-maker is not amenable to rational bases for actions, the planner will at least have a clear (perhaps too clear) definition of one CEO's perspective on planning and an understanding of the role of planners and planning in that particular system for that particular chief executive officer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balderston, F. Managing Today's University. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974.

Braun, S. Budget Planning Models: The Crisis for Information Systems. ERIC Reports (ED 174 073), 1979.

Cooke, A. (Ed.). Planning Rational Retrenchment - New Direction for Institutional Research (#24). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979.

Cope, R. Strategic Policy Planning. Ireland Education Corp., 1978.

Dressel, P., Johnson, C., and Marcus, P. The Confidence Crisis. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971.

Enarson, H. The Art of Planning. Educational Record, Summer, 1975, pp. 170-174.

Kieft, R. Academic Planning: Four Institutional Case Studies. Boulder: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 1978.

Kieft, R., Armijo, F., and Bucklew, N. A Handbook for Institutional Academic and Program Planning: From Idea to Implementation. Boulder: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 1978.

Micek, S. Integrating Academic Planning and Budgeting in a Rapidly Changing Environment: Process and Technical Issues. Boulder: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 1980.

Miles, R. The Origin and Meaning of Miles' Law. Public Administration Review, 1978, 38, pp. 399-403.

Mims, R. Facilitating Pervasive Planning: Multi-Level Institutional Planning. ERIC Reports (ED 174 127), 1979.

Miyataki, G. An Empirical Study of Implementing an Academic Unit Planning Tool. University of Hawaii, No Date.

Parekh, S. Long Range Planning. New York: Change Magazine Press, 1977.

Shirley, R., and Volkwein, J. Establishing Academic Program Priorities. Journal of Higher Education, 1978, 49, pp. 472-488.

Shuck, E. The New Meaning and an Old Pragmatism. Journal of Higher Education, 1977, 48, pp. 594-602.

Tetlow, W. From History Observed, One May Prophesy. In R. Cope (Ed.). Professional Development in Institutional Research: New Directions in Institutional Research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979.